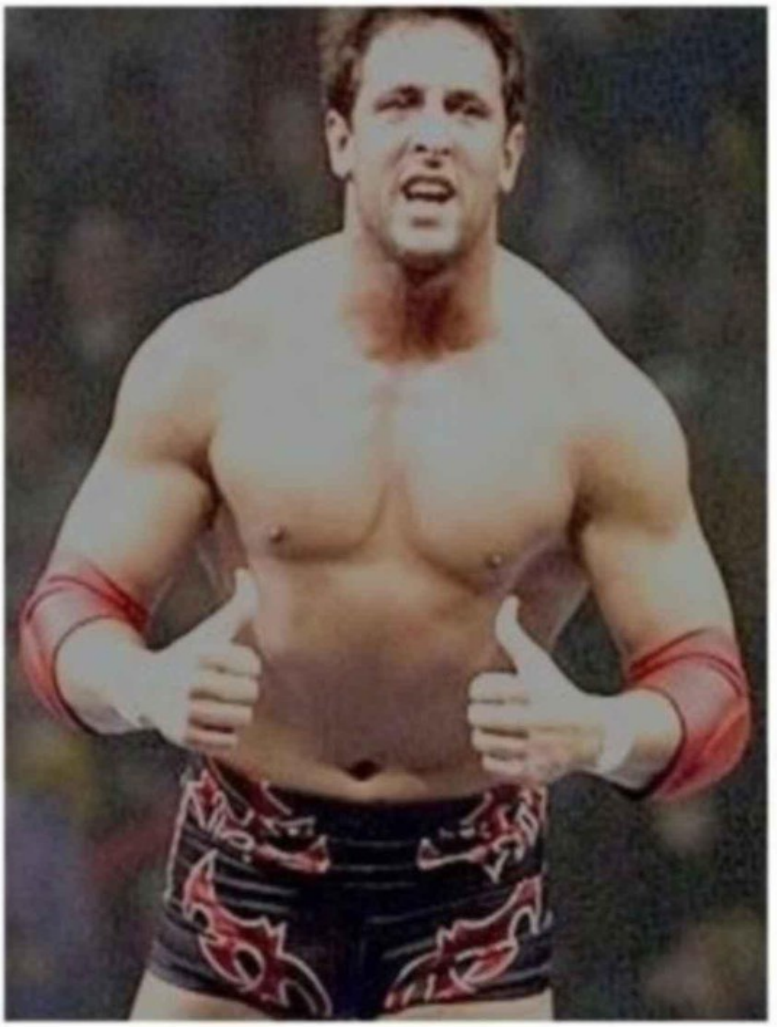

BILLY KIDMAN

the shooting star

L. Anne Carrington

Billy Kidman:
The Shooting Star

L. Anne Carrington

Palm Tree Books

Tampa

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Billy Kidman: The Shooting Star

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Preface

He's been dubbed Master of the Shooting Star Press and the 1990's uncrowned sexy wrestler. GayProWrestling.com voted him as "the best bubble booty on a short guy in wrestling."

Female fans loved him, yet he didn't intimidate most male followers. His signature move has gone in the books as one of wrestling's most beautiful yet dangerous skills.

Billy Kidman was one of the most popular midcard wrestlers in the now-defunct World Championship Wrestling, where most of his success included multiple cruiserweight and tag team championship titles. He gained fame in

WCW as a member of the Raven's Flock, Filthy Animals, and New Blood factions.

Kidman also engaged in memorable feuds with several top stars such as Hulk Hogan, Juventud Guerrera, Shane Douglas, Jeff Jarrett, and Rey Mysterio.

After WCW's purchase by the World Wrestling Federation (since renamed World Wrestling Entertainment), Kidman became a member of the WCW/ECW Allianc. Despite being in a tweener role during the Invasion angle, he was cheered by WWE fans and received a standing ovation after defeating X-Pac for the Light Heavyweight title.

Several fans voiced sentiments over the years that Kidman's star would've shone brighter had WCW given him a more appropriate push. He was well over with the crowd, especially during the Filthy Animals era.

He's seldom mentioned in the same breath nowadays as bigger stars of the 1990's and early 2000's, but Kidman more than compensated for lack of stature with attitude and energy combined

with attention-grabbing, high-flying moves, attributes he eventually passed to future stars as a former trainer for Florida Championship Wrestling (now NXT).

In times we hear about past wrestling superstars being dead or bankrupt before age fifty, Kidman's story has had a happier ending thus far.

Now entering his forties, Kidman currently enjoys current success working behind the scenes for WWE as an agent/producer.

His past and present accomplishments are far from shabby for a man who was told he'd never make it because he was "too small."

But he's not finished yet…

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Pete Gruner

Allentown is the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's third most populous municipality behind Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, with a population of approximately 118,000 people. Allentown emerged over the years as the state's fastest growing municipality and America's 222nd largest city. As the seat of Lehigh County, Allentown is perhaps best known for Billy Joel's 1982 hit song bearing the same name.

Many print and online wrestling publications often state the man born Peter Alan Gruner, Jr. on May 11, 1974 as an Allentown native, but his actual birthplace is New Haven, Connecticut. He once lived in Orefield, Pennsylvania, a small

unincorporated community located only a few miles from Allentown.

Pete Gruner attended Kernsville Elementary in Orefield and Troxell Junior High School in South Whitehall Township before graduating from Parkland High School in 1992.

The extremely athletic Gruner played sports throughout his teen years, excelling in baseball and track, but wrestling remained his first love from age six.

“I still remember when my dad took me to my first live wrestling match,” he reflected in a 1997 interview with Ross Foreman. “It was in the mid-1980s at the New Haven Coliseum and Hulk Hogan was there. It was just amazing.”

Hogan’s 6'8 frame and mammoth sizes of other wrestlers appearing in that show couldn’t have gone unnoticed by Gruner. Other stars of the WWF era such as Andre the Giant, Jake “The Snake” Roberts, Big Boss Man, and Randy “Macho Man” Savage all exceeded six feet in height and had billed weights well over 230

pounds.

Gruner stopped growing at 5‘10 and 195 pounds by adulthood.

The first step to achieving his dream was literally nearby: Allentown became the home of Afa’s Wild Samoan Training Center during the late 1980‘s.

Afa Anoa‘i is a member of WWE’s Hall of Fame and a former three-time tag team champion as one half of the legendary Wild Samoans. Michael Hayes and Yokozuna are just two names among a list of wrestling luminaries whom Afa previously trained.

Sixteen-year-old Pete Gruner was a regular visitor at the Wild Samoan Training Center. He made an early attempt to inquire about training, but Afa remained adamant that he wouldn’t work with the youth until he turned eighteen.

Gruner returned to the Wild Samoan Training Center three years later, borrowing money from his college fund in addition to working as a bank teller and lifeguard to cover tuition.

“I thought I needed to go to school to have something to fall back on, but I just couldn't stick it out. I had to go for my dream and go for a shot at wrestling,” he explained in an August 1999 *WOW Magazine* feature.

"After a while, he [Gruner] spent so much time here that I figured I might as well train him," Afa told *The Wrestler* magazine. "He always had a lot of heart and natural ability, even though he isn't big. But heart and ability can make up for that."

The majority of Gruner's Wild Samoan classmates were considerably larger in size, but none had as much determination or athletic ability. He was often thrown around in the ring and took several bumps, both which inspired him to become smarter, quicker, and more athletic.

Wrestling training isn't simple or painless as many tend to think, facets for which Gruner was grateful.

"The hard part about training was getting the guts

to get in the ring and take the bumps and learn the falls and things like that," he elaborated in *WOW Magazine*. "Afa made sure you did your stuff right, which is good. You are not allowed to move in what you've learned until you get what you're working on right. You can't advance until you have your stuff down pat. You look back on that and you are thankful for it because that's what makes you good."

He also shared a common trait with Afa: being a perfectionist. “I like to do my best in everything. I like to give it my all. If you're not going to give your all, it's not even worth doing. I'm my worst critic far as when I watch my matches, seeing things I could have done better or want to do different next time. When it comes to wrestling, I am self-motivated. When it comes to wrestling, since that's my love and my dream, I always motivate myself to do what I have to do.”

Gruner spent most his training sharpening aerial skills by developing sublime drop kicks from the ropes and a breathtaking moonsault variation based on the style originated by Jushin “Thunder” Liger in Japan that would become Gruner’s most famous move - The Shooting Star Press.

His version involved standing on the ropes, jumping, performing a back flip, and landing on his downed opponent. It's not easy to execute, requiring jumping forward and doing back flips at the same time.

Gruner graduated from the Wild Samoan's six-month program in November 1994 - completing initial training in record time of three months - but continued working with Afa to further strengthen his skills.

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But one question remained unanswered: would the skinny yet highly athletic kid from Eastern Pennsylvania ever make it in a profession usually reserved for men of colossal proportions?

Pete Gruner believed he could, and set out to prove his early detractors wrong.

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Kid Flash

Everyone is familiar with the glamour and glitz associated with professional wrestling, but those who make it into the limelight - save for a rare few - spent several years in obscurity on the independent circuit before their big breaks. Far more men and women continue to toil away in regional promotions to date, never seeing themselves on television.

Like many of his colleagues, Pete Gruner started on wrestling's bottom rung, He debuted in 1994 in independent promotions on the east coast as Kid Flash, and it didn't take long for people to hear about a charismatic youngster who could do the Shooting Star Press.

When asked by a Twitter follower in September 2010 about origins of the Kid Flash ring name, Kidman responded, “Me and a friend of mine had been thinking of what name I could use and that popped into our minds.”

His career took a somewhat upward turn with early championships that included snaring Trans-World Wrestling Federation's (TWWF) Cruiserweight title in singles action and the East Coast Wrestling Alliance's (ECWA) and United States Wrestling Association's (USWA) tag team gold with Shooting Stars partner Ace Darling.

Meanwhile, he attempted to keep wrestling hidden from family members. Pete Sr. was generally against the profession, so nothing was said until Kid Flash received too many unexplained bruises and about to relocate to Memphis. He invited his father to an upcoming show, and the elder Gruner became more supportive after viewing his son's passion for sports entertainment.

The Shooting Stars' relationship soured when Darling placed blame on Kid Flash after the team lost their ECWA tag championship to Simon Diamond and Steve Corino.

Kid Flash soon learned from veteran wrestlers that friends turning into enemies were commonplace within the sport. Afa also warned him not to get too close to anyone because wrestling was a dog-eat-dog business.

Fortunately, Kid Flash had plenty of friends and admirers in the business; Terry Taylor and the late Chris Kanyon were among his mentors. Both men spotted important tools needed to make it in wrestling: skills and desire. All Kid Flash needed was the right opportunity.

He continued aiming higher even during lackluster moments of his career. One stop was WWE in 1996, and Kidman still remembers the outcome of that first tryout match.

"Funny story," he recalled in a September 2011 *Where Are They Now?* feature on WWE.com. "[Former WWE producer] Tony Garea pulled aside one of the guys I was with and told him not to bring me anymore, because I was too small."

He *did* have some distinguishing aspects working in his favor; in addition to dark, boyish good looks paired with willingness to perform high-risk maneuvers made him stand out among run-of-the-mill indy talent, wrestling as a whole began evolving in the mid-1990‘s. Big men still ruled the roost, but lack of size no longer eliminated smaller wrestlers achieving success long as they displayed in-ring ability.

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His small physique may have prevented landing a spot on WWE's roster, but thanks to Chris Kanyon's encouragement, World Championship Wrestling came knocking on the door with a contract. Kid Flash made his WCW arrival in June 1996 with a new name: Billy Kidman.

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The WCW Years

A hard-won spot on WCW's roster could've given Billy Kidman reasons to believe professional wrestling stardom was finally within reach. Self-confidence still intact, he believed no one could match his high-flying proficiency and finally made the big time after honing his craft for two years.

In reality, his arrival went practically unnoticed.

Kidman's June 10, 1996 debut on *Monday Night Nitro* showed a clean-cut lanky cruiserweight that looked more like a fraternity boy than professional wrestler. Some fans who viewed footages of Kidman's early WCW work often pointed out his resemblance to either Steve Burns,

former host of the late 1990‘s children’s television show *Blue’s Clues* or stand-up comedian, screenwriter and voice actor Ray Romano, best known for his role on the sitcom *Everybody Loves Raymond*.

His first television appearance was far from memorable, losing to opponent Steven Regal. Another *Nitro* match on July 15 facing Dean Malenko and an August 20 bout in against Diamond Dallas Page in Dalton, Georgia added to Kidman's loss column.

He continued wrestling over the next several months, usually appearing at non-televised events or on *WCW Saturday Night*, a show that had a miniscule amount of viewers in contrast to *Nitro* and *Thunder's* audiences.

Kidman barely wrestled fifty matches during his first year with WCW - that he usually lost - and cleared a meager salary of only $11,000.

Between his sparse WCW appearances, Kidman

appeared in Wilmington, Delaware on February 22, 1997 to compete in ECWA's Super 8 Tournament, making it to the semifinals before he was eliminated by Cheetah Master. Interestingly, Kidman's former ECWA tag team partner Ace Darling captured that year's Super 8 championship.

Kidman scored one of his first WCW victories on March 15 in Florence, South Carolina over U.S. Champion Eddie Guerrero by count out; unfortunately for Kidman, stipulations for claiming the title were limited to either pinfall or submission.

Spending over a year jobbing with no gimmick wasn't the ideal setting for a budding cruiserweight, but Kidman remained optimistic that his career was headed in a positive direction.

He appeared on *WCW Saturday Night* nearly every week and faced better competitors. While his losing streak continued, not only did he receive more opportunities to enhance his skills against a wider variety of combatants, but also was in early stages of being noticed.

“I was kind of learning on the job, but people took notice,” Kidman admitted to WWE.com. “The more matches I got put in, the more confidence they had in me, and it just grew from there.”

He achieved one of the most important wins of his career October 4, 1997 on *WCW Saturday Night* by pinning Alex Wright. Wright was far from superstar status yet well-known by WCW fans and held the cruiserweight title for three weeks earlier that year.

Kidman's victory over Wright acquired the attentions of everyone from fans to promoters… including a man named Raven.

***

A two-time heavyweight champion with Extreme Championship Wresting (ECW) prior to his arrival in WCW, Raven was spotted sitting in the front

row on *Nitro's* June 30, 1997 episode and acknowledged by commentators as "a man who has been a champion with other organizations."

He frequently appeared ringside in subsequent months with a group of lackeys he dubbed "The Flock," and eventually accepted a WCW contract with stipulations he could wrestle only when he wanted and under his own rules.

Raven sat at ringside with Perry Saturn watching a rematch between Kidman and Wright on October 6. Kidman lost the match, but was invited by Raven and Saturn to join The Flock a few days later.

Kidman soon transformed from a gregarious, wholesome young man any girl would be proud to introduce to her parents into a sullen, long-haired, flea-bitten, unshaven street punk wearing ratty T-shirts and constantly scratched himself. The change both brought out his dark side and guided him towards a somewhat improved career path.

He started appearing on *Nitro* more often, which exposed his impressive aerial abilities to a larger WCW fan base. Unfortunately, being part of The Flock made him known more for willingness to

interfere in matches involving other members than his own talent.

Not long after joining The Flock, he was defeated by Cruiserweight Champion Rey Mysterio, Jr. A month later, he lost a *Nitro* bout to Chris Benoit.

Fans finally began noticing Kidman's wrestling ability during a sensational face-off against Ultimo Dragon in February 1998. Kidman lost, but his and Ultimo's contest was praised by many as one of the year's best matches. Kidman claimed his biggest WCW victory to date three days later by performing the Shooting Star Press (then known as "Seven Year Itch") and pinning Juventud Guerrera.

After spending almost two years in near-obscurity, Kidman found himself becoming one of WCW's central figures, gaining additional matches and scoring more victories. Losses to Juventud Guerrera and Ultimo Dragon failed to stop him; his confidence soared higher with each bout sent his way. Matches with Guerrera became deemed as classics and the pair faced off three

times in a month, Guerrera winning twice.

July 12, 1998 marked Kidman's first pay-per-view appearance on *Bash at the Beach* against Guerrera in a nonstop, devil-may-care exhibition featuring plenty of innovative maneuvers and high-flying action that kept fans talking weeks afterward.

Conflict within the Flock remained a roadblock to Kidman's rising star; he and other members perceived their careers were being sacrificed for Raven's benefit. While Kidman's took off after joining The Flock, Raven had successfully brainwashed him and other members.

However, one man was free from Raven's control: his enforcer, Perry Saturn.

Raven and Saturn battled for control over The Flock during the summer of 1998 that climaxed with a "Control of The Flock" match at the September 13, 1998 *Fall Brawl* pay-per-view. If Saturn emerged victorious, The Flock would be freed; should Raven win, Saturn would rejoin the group with Raven retaining control.

After Lodi, Sick Boy, and Horace Boulder interfered, Kidman sprinted into the ring and hit Raven with a missile drop kick, clearing the way for Saturn to pin Raven. Saturn then set the Flock free, encouraging each member to walk their respective WCW paths.

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A cleaned-up, smiling, and much more outgoing Kidman appeared on *Nitro* to face Juventud Guerrera in a match for the WCW Cruiserweight Championship the following night - with an ending no one expected to see.

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Billy Kidman lost his first WCW cruiserweight title to Juventud Guerrera one month later, and then recaptured it six days later. He continued racking up successful title defenses that began with defeating Disco Inferno on September 21, 1998.

Despite losing to Scott Hall in a non-title contest, Kidman recovered from the loss to defeat

Psicosis in the first of many face-offs between the two that included a Hair vs. Mask contest which Kidman emerged victorious.

He went toe to toe with Rey Mysterio in a strong match on the October 19 *Nitro* that ended in a draw and also retained his cruiserweight title in a *Halloween Havoc* match against Disco Inferno.

The cruiserweights were becoming a focal point and Kidman was leading the way. Now that he'd become Cruiserweight Champion, he took a shot at the WCW TV title held by Chris Jericho with a time-limit draw. Kidman didn't win, but his reputation as a talented and well-rounded worker became solidified.

Four days after his match on *Thunder* against Chavo Guerrero Jr. that ended in a no contest, Kidman lost his cruiserweight championship to Juventud Guerrera on *Nitro*. He wasn't bereft long; he won back the title at the *World War 3* pay-per-view November 22 by pinning Guerrera with the Shooting Star Press.

He made the ultimate defense of his championship December 27 at *Starrcade* - touted as WCW's

equivalent of WWE's *WrestleMania* - in a triple threat tournament against former champions Guerrera and Mysterio, risking losing the title if either opponent pinned him.

That match is often described as an aerial artistry staple; all three competitors scored near-falls on one another, but Kidman overpowered Guerrera while Mysterio held an attempting-to-interfere Eddie Guerrero at bay.

Kidman's night didn't end there; he successfully pinned Guerrero in a second match and once again retained his championship.

Two appearances in one night at *Starrcade* caught the fans' attention, but Kidman soon faced tougher challenges. A quadruple-threat match against Guerrera, Psicosis and Mysterio took place at *Souled Out* on January 17, 1999, where Kidman pinned Guerrera and remained champion. He held WCW's Cruiserweight Championship for another two months before being defeated by Mysterio on

March 15's *Nitro*.

Mysterio and Kidman had an unusual on-screen relationship; they'd teamed up against the since disbanded Latino World Order (LWO), Mysterio often appeared in Kidman's triple-threat title defenses and was now champion.

It was almost inevitable the pair would align as a tag team, soon capturing the WCW Tag Team titles from Chris Benoit and Dean Malenko on March 29, 1999.

He and Mysterio were still tag team champions when they battled face-to-face at *Spring Stampede* in a strongly contested bout for the Cruiserweight Championship that saw many changes in advantage. Mysterio struck his head on stairs leading into the ring, but recovered enough to score a pin on Kidman.

The tag champions had occasional odd moments. During a cruiserweight title match between Mysterio and Kidman in Baltimore, Benoit and Malenko appeared ringside demanding a tag title shot. Mysterio and Kidman accepted the

challenge, and their singles match converted to a tag team battle for the championship.

"It was strange," Kidman told *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*. "I don't think I've ever had anything like that happen to me. One second I want to beat the man, the next second I'm on his side. It takes a big adjustment in your mindset to get used to something like that, but fortunately we got through it with the belts around our waists."

Mysterio and Kidman no longer had concerns about the tag team titles after losing them to Perry Saturn and Raven in a three-way contest May 9 that included Malenko and Benoit. Kidman and Mysterio remained friends throughout challenges they faced either against each other or other opponents, mostly out of tremendous mutual respect.

“It’s really hard to have a bad match with Rey Mysterio,” Kidman reflected on WWE.com. “He's one of my favorite guys to be in there with, whether it’s tag team or opponent.”

A feud with Hugh Morris opened another era in Kidman’s career. He’d battled mostly cruiserweights up to that point in his WCW career, but obtained two impressive victories

against Morris, who was great in size, but lacked vital skills to go head to head with Kidman.

While continuing to face Mysterio and other fellow cruiserweights, Kidman took on additional larger opponents that included a July 19 *Nitro* loss to Randy "Macho Man" Savage.

Another match between Kidman and Mysterio ended when heavyweights Curt Hennig and Bobby Duncan interfered, and Vampiro ran interference during a *Thunder* match between Kidman and Eddie Guerrero. Both incidents spawned Kidman, Mysterio, Guerrero and Konnan to form WCW's most well-known cruiserweight faction: The Filthy Animals.

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Billy Kidman stated during an August 1999 in-ring interview with Mean Gene Okerlund that he and friends Rey Mysterio, Eddie Guerrero and Konnan were "just a group of filthy animals" who hung out both on and off camera. Originally branded to be WCW's version of a younger D-Generation X, the

Filthy Animals enjoyed pulling pranks on both good and bad guys.

The Filthy Animals put on an impressive, quick-paced match against The Dead Pool (Vampiro and Insane Clown Posse with Raven) at the *Road Wild* pay-per-view from Sturgis, South Dakota August 14, claiming victory after Kidman hit the Shooting Star Press and pinned ICP's Shaggy 2 Dope.

Two nights later, Kidman commented to "Mean" Gene Okerland during *Nitro* that he thought Kimberly was the most beautiful Nitro Girl, which infuriated Kimberly's husband, "Diamond" Dallas Page and sparked an impromptu match. He pulled off a surprising win over the former WCW heavyweight champion, but Kidman was later whipped and hung by Page out of anger.

One strong trait possessed by the Filthy Animals was never backing down from feuds. The Dead Pool, The Revolution, Team Canada, Misfits in Action, and Natural Born Thrillers were among the Filthy Animals' most prominent adversaries. Mysterio and Kidman also feuded with Juventud Guerrera and Psicosis.

Aggravating opponents never intimidated

Kidman; the flirty cruiserweight began eyeing up other men's wives and girlfriends. He and David Flair's stunning valet, Torrie Wilson, appeared to be flirting with each other in October. Flair confronted her with evidence he'd found, but she brushed off his accusations. One week later, Kidman gave her a mink coat.

Flair's suspicions were confirmed October 18 during a showdown with Kidman when Torrie distracted Flair, a move that gave Kidman opportunity to win with the Shooting Star Press. Other Filthy Animals members invaded the ring and attacked Flair afterward. Kidman and Torrie were now an official couple.

The following week's *Nitro* seemed *déjà vu* for Kidman; he faced off against a friend and teamed with him the same night for the second time that year. Interference by Harlem Heat allowed Kidman to score a win over Konnan in a first-round tournament for the vacant WCW World Title before he later aligned with Konnan to defeat Harlem Heat for the tag team titles.

He gained additional television time on *Nitro* and

Thunder in the following weeks. The Filthy Animals beat Steven Regal, Dave Taylor and Chris Adams on *Thunder's* October 28 episode. Eddie Guerrero rescued Torrie from The Revolution on *Nitro* November 1, with Kidman and Konnan successfully defending their tag belts later that night against Sting and Lex Luger.

Kidman eliminated Norman Smiley in a hardcore match and advanced to the world title's quarter finals on November 8. Konnan and Kidman scored another win on *Thunder* November 11 over Jerry Flynn and The Barbarian, but Kidman's own path to claim the world title halted o n *Nitro* November 15 when he lost to Bret "Hitman" Hart.

November 1999 ended on low notes for Kidman and The Filthy Animals. The Filthy Animals became embroiled in a feud with The Revolution (Shane Douglas, Dean Malenko, Perry Saturn, Chris Benoit and Asya), and things didn't improve after the Filthy Animals encountered a loss to The Revolution in an eight-person elimination bout at *WCW Mayhem* when Torrie twisted her ankle early in the match.

An argument flared between Guerrero and Kidman as to who should help her before Guerrero shoved Kidman, leading the way for Dean Malenko to roll up Kidman.

Kidman and Konnan then lost to Creative Control in a tag team championship match on *Nitro* November 22, and Kidman racked up yet another defeat later that night to Eddie Guerrero.

Despite a December 23 Filthy Animals victory on *Thunder* over The Revolution, Kidman succumbed to WCW United States Champion Jeff Jarrett on 1999‘s final episode of *Nitro*.

While he experienced some setbacks during 1999, it turned out to be a banner year for him career wise. Kidman had been ranked #132 in 1998’s *Pro Wrestling Illustrated 500*; one year later, he placed 31st in the rankings.

But bigger challenges awaited him in the new millennium - both literally and figuratively.

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The year 2000 opened with WCW on the edge of a downward spiral. "The Monday Night Wars" were in full swing, and WWE's *Raw* trumped WCW's *Nitro* at every turn. Everything within the WCW brand suffered as a result: losses in pay-per-view buy rates, waning fan attendance, and sinking television ratings.

WCW's remaining viewers expressed disgust of Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair, Sting, "Diamond" Dallas Page, Lex Luger, Terry Funk, and others being featured on *Nitro* every week. The message was clear: fans were ready for younger talent and wanted it on their TV screens *now*.

Billy Kidman somehow answered the call. With Torrie by his side, his popularity in WCW rose to the highest levels while piling up one victory

after another against a wide range of combatants.

Yet main event status still eluded him.

Kidman was vocal in his frustrations of not being pushed by promoters and writers. He threatened to leave WCW for another federation, but decided to stay only after management promised him larger roles.

Trouble began brewing within the Filthy Animals; Eddie Guerrero made a leap to WWE, Mysterio was recovering from an ankle injury and Konnan suspended, leaving Kidman with no one except Torrie.

Her presence seemed substantial for a while, helping Kidman endure a feud with Vampiro that lasted a month before Kidman's stunning win at *SuperBrawl 2000*. After the Harris Brothers interfered in the Kidman-Booker T match, he and Booker formed an unlikely alliance, focusing on tag team gold.

The new team had a strong start towards their goal on March 20 with Booker's early domination over the Harris Brothers, but their match ended in a DQ when Ron Harris whacked Booker with the

tag team belt.

WCW headed in another direction when executives Eric Bischoff and Vince Russo introduced a new era on April 10, 2000. They needed to follow through on two promises, one of them made to Kidman months earlier. Both men announced days of The Millionaire's Club - Hogan, Sting, Flair, Luger, Page and their ilk - was being placed on the back burner in favor of The New Blood.

Kidman had no idea what any of that had to do with him, but his curiosity was nevertheless piqued.

Hogan arrived at the arena and was unaware of the announcement. Sting relayed what transpired earlier, causing Hogan to become incensed and hunt down Bischoff for answers.

Another opportunity presented itself to Kidman. The cocky young star grabbed a microphone and commanded center stage, spilling out frustrations of being "used and abused for years and told to keep his mouth shut."

Kidman stated that the night was *his* and wanted to address the biggest egomaniac of all: Hulk Hogan.

He lamented how Hogan badmouthed him for weeks behind his back, but he had two things Hulk never would: heart and talent. Kidman added the only way Hulk got that “creepy orange tan” was from “being in the spotlight way too long.”

“You say Billy Kidman can't draw flies? Well, you may be right, but who would know better about drawing flies than a pile of shit like you?”

Hogan spotted a monitor backstage and couldn’t believe what he was he was hearing.

“Come on, Hulk,” Kidman goaded. “It's time to see if your balls are as big as your bald spot!”

Furious, Hogan stormed to the ring and asked Kidman who the hell he thought he was. He’d been sitting in the back and that night wasn’t the first he listened to Kidman’s crap. Hogan had been watching Kidman the last couple months complain about when he would get a push, and how Kidman was “the kind of punk who gave young guys in this business a bad name.”

Hogan elaborated if Kidman was in the same league and game as he, Kidman may understand what the business was about, but was “so damn P-whipped and in love with that girl...”

Kidman reached his breaking point and lunged, flooring Hogan with several kicks and punches. Their combat spilled outside the ring, where Hogan slammed Kidman into the ring post and barriers before tossing him back into the ring for additional punishment.

Eric Bischoff then appeared with steel chair in hand and instructed Hogan to pick up Kidman.

Had Bischoff backed out on his promises after all?

The moment of truth arrived when Hogan lifted Kidman from the mat. In a swerve no one expected, Bischoff sneaked up behind Hogan and cracked his skull with the chair.

Hogan collapsed, stunned, allowing Kidman to seize a chance of pulling off the biggest night of his career. He fell on Hogan and pinned him as Bischoff made a three count. It wasn't an official match, but fans received confirmation that a new era was indeed underway.

A recovered Hogan spent the evening's remainder searching for Kidman and Bischoff, checking locker rooms and other backstage areas, but came up empty-handed. Frustrated by failing to find either man, Hogan climbed into a limo and contacted his lawyer.

During his phone call, a white Hummer came into view, sped toward Hogan's limo, and slammed into its side. The Hummer backed up and rammed the limo a few more times before Bischoff and Kidman emerged.

The pair wasn't finished; as EMT's prepared to transport Hogan to the hospital, Kidman and Bischoff made one last appearance to spray paint three initials on Hogan's chest: *T-N-B*.

The New Blood.

***

The Millionaire's Club-New Blood feud actually emerged from a long-going debate between fans of young talent and those of seasoned superstars for long as anyone could remember. Supporters of the veterans believed newer up-and-comers weren't able to pull their weight in WCW; others backing younger guys were tired of seeing the same faces on their televisions every week.

Kidman and others in the New Blood had one ambition in mind: to become WCW superstars. The Millionaire's Club wanted to maintain their lofty positions in the company.

Although Kidman continued battling bigger stars - Hogan his chief target - his ultimate goal of claiming the WCW heavyweight title remained out of reach. He was one of final four contenders

remaining in a battle royal before being eliminated by Hogan.

Kidman and Hogan faced one another at *Slamboree* with Eric Bischoff as guest referee, but Kidman once again ended up on the losing end after interference by Hogan's nephew, Horace.

The Millionaire's Club was unsure whom to trust. Hogan and Kidman squared off in a three-way event that included Horace Hogan, who stood by as his uncle pummeled Kidman before a run-in by the Filthy Animals.

The Hogans cleared the ring before Horace nodded at Torrie and then whacked Hulk with a steel chair. Hogan's own nephew had turned on him and joined The New Blood.

Meanwhile, karma aimed its sights on Kidman. He'd stolen Torrie from David Flair; now he suspected she was involved with Horace.

Kidman's supposition spurned a bout against Horace, with Torrie as guest referee. Hulk Hogan interfered in their match, slamming Kidman on top

of Horace and ordered a clearly terrified Torrie to make the three count.

Horace was a guest referee for the Kidman-Hulk match at the 2000 *Great American Bash* pay-per-view. Kidman desperately wanted to win, but Hulk had considerably more at stake.

If Hulk lost, he would retire; if he won, he'd get a shot at the WCW heavyweight title.

The match brought misfortune for Kidman. Torrie handed Hulk a set of brass knuckles, but Kidman swiped them and clocked Hulk for a two count. Hogan won the match after Torrie kneed Kidman below the belt, marking the official end of their on-screen relationship.

Kidman appeared as guest referee in a bout between Jeff Jarrett and Hulk on the June 12 *Nitro*. No one believed Kidman would be an unbiased referee, and their assumptions were correct. Jarrett's and Hulk's match ended in a No Contest when Kidman refused to cheat on Jarrett's behalf. He aligned with his now-former adversary and turned his back on the New Blood.

Bill Goldberg, in a shocking heel turn, stormed to the ring, speared Kidman, and plowed Hogan

through a table before GI Bro interfered and saved the two contenders from further assaults.

Fans became confused as to The Filthy Animals' actual state when Kidman saved Lance Storm from a Filthy Animals attack. He and Storm prevailed over Mysterio and Juventud Guerrera on *Thunder* June 28.

Mysterio and Guerrera got retribution by scoring a victory against Kidman and Storm five days later in a *Nitro* match, thanks to run-ins by Konnan and Disco Inferno. On the July 5 episode of *Thunder,* Kidman lost a four-way bout against Storm, Disco Inferno, and Mysterio.

Past and present feuds with the Filthy Animals were cast aside during Kidman's wars with Hogan, additional WCW veterans, and other young stars. Jarrett, Nash and Booker T became world heavyweight champions.

Kidman, on the other hand, never got his shot. He wasn't even contending for the cruiserweight title any longer; on top of everything else, *The Wrestling Observer Newsletter* named his feud with Hogan as 2000's Worst Feud of the Year.

However, his career outside the ring continued to rise with appearances on *Jenny Jones* and *The Dating Game,* a part in the Warner Brothers film *Ready to Rumble,* and getting his own Bruisers action figure. Women became enthralled with Kidman, but the one he loved most had dumped him.

Torrie moved on to another man, and her new relationship marked the beginning of a vicious feud between present and former lovers.

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Kidman turned face following The New Blood's collapse and focused attention on his next target, Shane Douglas, with one goal in mind: to win back Torrie's affections.

Douglas was a respected talent with an outstanding resume; he won the WCW tag team title with Ricky Steamboat in 1992 and helped establish ECW as a federation to be reckoned with by winning and defending three world

heavyweight championships.

“The Franchise” always got what he wanted and Torrie was his latest acquisition.

Things got underway during the summer of 2000. "Little Billy Kidman," Torrie remarked on *Nitro* July 10. "There was just something about you that didn't quite please me."

A shocked and hurt Kidman struck back in a backstage interview with Pamela Paulshock. "What Torrie Wilson doesn't realize is that skanks like her are a dime a dozen. She's a gold digger."

Jeff Jarrett appeared and shoved Kidman out of the way, leading to a brawl between them. Another segment saw Jarrett burst into The Cat's office and demand a title match, but Cat booked him to face Kidman instead.

Jarrett had early advantage when Kidman was hip

tossed to the floor, the beginning of what was a fast-paced, attention-grabbing match.

Torrie came to the ring and distracted Kidman shortly after he'd pushed Jarrett over the top rope. They briefly argued and she slapped him. Shane Douglas appeared and attacked Kidman from behind. He fought off Douglas, but received a low blow from Torrie.

Douglas executed a DDT on Kidman, sending him to the floor, and then tossed him back into the ring. Jarrett held Kidman for a two count, but he barely kicked out. Two unsuccessful attempts to powerbomb Kidman followed; Jarrett reversed a tornado bulldog into the Stroke for a win.

That was only the beginning of things to come.

Torrie had a few things to say to Kidman on *Nitro* July 18. His whole life had been about passion; for the business, about wrestling, about *her*, but she had to "fake it" every single night. She ended the diatribe with another revelation: "I played you for everything you had, and then I moved on."

Kidman flounced to the ring and received an early beat down from Douglas. He distracted the

referee while Torrie choked Kidman. Their battle spilled outside the ring, where Kidman slammed Douglas into stairs leading to the ring, followed by several punches.

Douglas responded by slamming Kidman crotch 4first into a ring post before sending him back inside the ring head first. Kidman got in some strong offense before Torrie grabbed his ankle, and Douglas covered him for a count of two.

Kidman kicked out of the Pittsburgh Plunge. Douglas was bumped into Torrie on the apron, Kidman rolled him up, but Douglas kicked out, which sent Kidman into a steel chair Torrie held. Douglas finally pulled off the win with his Franchiser.

Kidman should've learned his lesson after such a brutal exchange, but backing down from anyone - especially Douglas - was the last thing he considered.

Seated at the announce table during July 24's *Nitro,* Kidman revealed he'd brought "a very special gift" for Torrie's birthday. He held a videotape of Torrie Wilson and himself "engaging in some extracurricular activities."

He could've made millions selling his tape online, but instead brought it for everyone to watch. He had people in the truck and one way or another; the tape would be released *that* night.

Kidman later confirmed his intentions during a backstage segment with Pamela Paulshock and aimed a parting shot at Torrie. “Oh, and honey? It wasn’t The Franchise’s name you were screaming that night.”

A square-off between Shane Douglas and “Fat Chick Thriller” Mike Awesome was interrupted midway when Kidman’s tape appeared on the NitroVision and distracted Douglas. As the video continued playing, Awesome grabbed a metal weight from Torrie, clocked Douglas, and pulled off a victory.

Kidman appeared with a mischievous smile on his face, VHS cassette and lacy black thong in hand. He announced that he’d made enough video copies for the crowd, everyone in the back, and a

special one for Mark Madden.

Throughout his mind games and mean, violent battles with Douglas that included the infamous Viagra on a Pole Match, Kidman was angrier with Torrie's betrayal of him than at Douglas for wooing her away.

He realized the best way to hurt both his former girlfriend and Douglas at the same time: by humiliating Torrie, and that's exactly what happened August 7 on *Nitro*.

Kidman appeared to have done an about-face - least at first - after taking a seat at the announcers' table. He cut a sweet, nice promo for Torrie saying how he loved her and apologized for everything he did.

She came out and accepted the flowers he offered. Kidman then said he had another tape, which turned out to be her sixteenth birthday party.

The video showed an overweight Torrie indulging in birthday cake. Kidman twisted his

virtual knife by having leaflets of Torrie's unflattering high school photos fall from the ceiling when the tape finished playing.

Douglas, infuriated, charged the ring and attacked Kidman from behind, but was decked with brass knuckles Kidman had hidden inside a box of chocolates.

Torrie aimed a bottle of champagne toward Kidman's head, but he counterattacked, sending her to the mat. That brought out Reno, boyfriend of one of the Nitro Girls, who jumped and held him down Kidman while Douglas whipped Kidman with a belt before Big Vito made the save.

At the *New Blood Rising* pay-per-view, Kidman and Douglas once again put their respective prides on the line by competing in a strap match.

After much push-pull, back and forth action, Kidman got a pinfall over Douglas and then whipped Torrie with the strap.

Not happy with the loss, Douglas choked Kidman with the strap and proceeded to hang him before

Big Vito appeared and broke the hold. Reno then sprinted to the ring and brawled with Vito.

Kidman sustained a fractured larynx when the hanging stunt went awry, leaving him out of action for at least a few weeks.

“It's actually pretty scary when you watch it on tape,” he said in an interview with Matt Duda. “I was hanging there and you can see me make a last-ditch effort to tap him [Douglas] and tell him. You see my hand go try to tap him and all of a sudden I just go limp and I'm just hanging there for another three or four seconds. That I can work through. What's scary is the doctors said if I get clotheslined too hard in the throat the larynx will break, go into my windpipe and I'd probably die. But that's stuff that you can kind of work around.”

The Douglas-Kidman feud peaked September 17 with a *Fall Brawl* scaffold match. Kidman paired with Madusa to take on Douglas and Torrie. He and Madusa lost after Douglas kicked Madusa to the mat below, climbed back to the top, and tossed Kidman off the scaffold after Torrie

delivered him a low blow.

Kidman's feud with Douglas ended not long afterward. Both fought hard for Torrie, but Douglas had won.

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Billy Kidman aggravated his injured larynx at *Fall Brawl,* forcing another break from television. He returned to *Nitro* October 16 and reconnected with his old faction. Joining Konnan in a backstage interview with Pamela Paulshock, Kidman stated that he and the Filthy Animals were tight as ever.

He faced off against former New Blood member Scott Steiner that spawned from an earlier incident when Kidman had bumped into Midajah, Steiner's valet.

Kidman didn't stand a chance against the massive Steiner; he was pummeled from start to finish and Steiner scored an easy win by submission.

Many fans thought Kidman leaving behind the cruiserweight division in order to battle larger

competitors such as Hogan, Douglas, Steiner, Sting and Page in “grudge matches” were career mistakes, but he’d gained a sterling reputation of never backing down from challenges or seeking an easy way out.

“Some people who are smaller have a problem,” Kidman once stated in an online interview. “They try to wrestle like they are a lot bigger. When you know your size, you are able to put a match together to compliment both guys. I certainly am not going to body slam Kevin Nash, but there are other ways I can take him off his feet that are believable and make for an entertaining match. Basically, you just have to know your size and how to put a match together. I do know my size, and I don’t think I’ve even begun to have my best matches yet.”

Kidman’s belief had a ring of truth during 2000. He had a remarkable run in the latter part of his career, but he and WCW would face a far different fate within the next year.

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Invading WWF/E

Among other bouts in both tag and singles action during the remainder of 2000, Billy Kidman teamed with Rey Mysterio in a *Halloween Havoc* three-way match against The Boogie Knights (Alex Wright and Disqo) and current tag team champions Mark Jindrak and Sean O'Haire.

Kidman and Mysterio emerged victorious November 26 after KroniK walked out on Alex Wright during a handicap match at *WCW Mayhem* and defeated Jeff Jarrett in an elimination match on December 12's *Nitro.*

The Filthy Animals endured losses in six-man action on *Thunder* November 29 to Jarrett and

The Harris Brothers. Another loss came December 17 at *Starrcade* when Jarrett and The Harris Brothers won a Bunkhouse Brawl street fight over the Filthy Animals.

Kidman and Mysterio closed out 2000 by participating in a Tag Team Battle Royal December 20 on *Thunder*.

Kidman's 2001 career got off on a strong start January 8 with a win over Lance Storm. He and the Filthy Animals entered a feud with Team Canada (Storm, Elix Skipper, and Mike Awesome) after the Filthy Animals rescued "Hacksaw" Jim Duggan following his exile from Team Canada.

The two factions continued warring through January 2001, peaking at *SIN* with a Penalty Box Match. Duggan acted as special referee and tossed any wrestlers who cheated in a penalty box, but the bout marked another Filthy Animals loss.

Kidman and Mysterio soon moved on and participated in a tournament for the new WCW Cruiserweight Tag Team titles, eliminating

Johnny Swinger and Jason Lee in the first round o n *Nitro* February 26, Evan Karagias and Shannon Moore in the second March 14 which aired on *Thunder*. They lost the final round to Elix Skipper and Kid Romeo at *WCW Greed*.

But the bottom was about to drop out of WCW.

The World Wrestling Federation (WWF) and WCW competed for ratings during The Monday Night Wars through developments such as creation of the New World Order (nWo) and the Montreal Screwjob paired with Internet wrestling fan communities in constant debate over which federation produced superior programming.

Wrestling talent booking their own matches, corporate politics, and other areas of WCW's mismanagement plunged the company into a downward spiral from which it never rebounded.

On March 23, 2001, WWF purchased WCW for a bargain price.

March 26 marked the final chapter of The Monday Night Wars when *R a w* made the

upcoming *WrestleMania X-Seven* its center of attention while *Nitro* hosted a Night of Champions episode.

A simulcast with Vince McMahon addressing WCW's future began after Sting defeated Ric Flair in WCW's final match. Throughout *Raw,* McMahon had named several wrestlers on WCW's roster whose contracts would not be picked up by the WWF.

Shane McMahon appeared on *Nitro* and announced he had already signed the contract and purchased WCW. That kayfabe angle marked the beginning of a future story line many believed had strong potential.

"As soon as Shane McMahon walked through the door, that threw me and a lot of people for a loop," Kidman said on an episode of *Confidential*. "I'm sure there were a few people that knew Shane was going to be there, but I didn't know he was going to be there."

He and Mysterio pulled off one more WCW victory by capturing the Cruiserweight Tag Team Championship from Elix Skipper and Kid Romeo and later told they could take home and keep the championships because WWF no longer had any

use for them.

Kidman's job remained intact; his contract was one of twenty-five purchased by WWF and he would one of The Alliance's most popular members.

He made his first WWF television appearance in July 2001 on *Smackdown,* defeating Gregory Helms for the WCW Cruiserweight Championship and also became WWF Light Heavyweight at the *InVasion* pay-per-view over X-Pac.

Later that summer, Kidman spent a few months recovering from a partially torn posterior ligament in his knee and wisely used his down time between rehabilitation sessions. He kept up with the ever-unfolding saga of the Alliance vs. Federation by regularly watching *Raw* and *Smackdown*.

“It's cool to watch the show because I don't know what's going to happen,” he told Matt Dunda. “When you're at the show, you see what's going to

go on. It's cool like when they debuted the new *Smackdown* set; I had no idea what it looked like until the show came on. It's cool to watch it from that perspective because I don't get to do that much anymore."

Kidman made a triumphant *Smackdown* return October 11, 2001, where he defeated X-Pac to win the Cruiserweight Championship for a record-tying fifth time. His championship reign lasted eleven days before Tajiri defeated him in a title match on October 22.

An exciting, high-voltage *Jakked* contest against Jeff Hardy the following week also resulted in Kidman walking away with a loss.

He took part in an Immunity Battle Royal at *Survivor Series* that determined who wouldn't be fired for a year. Kidman lasted to being one of the final five contenders before Bradshaw eliminated him.

The Invasion angle was not without its critics

after *Survivor Series*. *SLAM! Wrestling* cited many story line failures, including The Alliance's weaknesses, overemphasis on the McMahons, lack of big-name WCW talent, and excessive focus on WWF defectors.

Fans formed their own opinions concerning The Invasion fiasco; WCW stars didn't get fair shakes in the booking process, WWF rushed into the angle by airing Booker T vs. Buff Bagwell as the very first WCW match, which is still regarded as one of the worst in television history. The defections of Kurt Angle and Stone Cold Steve Austin to WCW made no sense, and the WCW talent wasn't utilized to its full potential.

As for Billy Kidman, he disappeared from television for a period of time and didn't re-emerge until early 2002.

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Following the Invasion plot, Kidman turned face and became a mainstay with *Smackdown's* cruiserweight division. His physical appearance underwent a metamorphosis in the interim; gone were his WCW-era jean shorts, wife beaters, and lean frame. He now donned various styles of spandex wrestling attire and his physique blossomed into a solid 215 pounds.

"Basically, I've changed my cardio routine," he explained on a 2001 *Byte This!* episode. "I've also been steadily hitting the weights harder in the gym. I was always a late bloomer so I feel maybe that's why I'm growing."

Kidman's early WWF feuds consisted of Tajiri, John Cena, and Jamie Noble.

After a tag match on *Jakked* with The Hurricane against Tajiri and Sho Funaki ended in defeat, Kidman came back strong for a record-breaking sixth Cruiserweight Championship win on *Smackdown* April 4. His latest run lasted only 19 days before Tajiri reclaimed the title at *Backlash*.

Kidman emerged victorious against Tajiri on July 16, but was attacked by Cruiserweight Champion

Jamie Noble afterward. That incident kicked off a rivalry between the two and led to a title bout at *Vengeance*.

He didn't walk away with gold that time, but pulled off a win over Noble on the following week's *Velocity*. He and real-life fiancée Torrie Wilson in a *Smackdown* mixed tag match August 4 produced disappointing results for the pair after Noble's kayfabe girlfriend Nidia pinned Torrie.

Noble wasn't Kidman's only problem later that year. He had paired with John Cena against Kurt Angle and Chris Benoit on *Smackdown* October 8 in a tournament match for the tag team titles.

Angle and Benoit had reluctant alliance that became undone after they accidently bumped into each other, but they walked away a win after Kidman tapped out of Benoit's crippler crossface.

Kidman's losing streak was broken by a winning effort against John Cena October 24 on *Smackdown* He and Torrie appeared at *Rebellion* two days later against Dawn Marie and Cena, a contest that ended with Kidman pinning Cena after hitting the Shooting Star Press. Fans cheered in approval after Torrie expressed her gratitude

by engaging Kidman in a passionate kiss.

He broke yet another record by garnering his seventh Cruiserweight Championship during a fast-paced and action-packed match that saw fans in attendance emerge from calm to screaming out their seats. An elated Kidman walked through the crowd following the win with his newly-captured title held high.

2002 was an overall respectable year for Kidman. To onlookers, his future looked promising; he boasted a beautiful fiancée, had a new Ruthless Aggression 2 series action figure, and added two additional cruiserweight championships to his record.

But he was just getting started.

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Billy Kidman eased into 2003 as a cornerstone of WWE's cruiserweight division. He kicked off the New Year on *Smackdown* by defeating Eddie Guerrero after John Cena whacked Guerrero with a chain.

Meanwhile, speculation spread among fans during spring 2003 that a bare-bottomed Kidman appeared in a shower scene of Torrie Wilson's first *Playboy* shoot. The male with his back turned to the camera was never actually identified, but attributes of long dark hair, skin tone, and body type that strongly resembled Kidman's left many convinced it was indeed he.

His winning streak continued through early February, defeating Matt Hardy, Shannon Moore and Jamie Noble in singles action on both *Smackdown* and *Velocity*.

Kidman remained Cruiserweight Champion for 98 days before he faced Hardy for the title at *No Way Out* February 23. Hardy previously vowed to lose enough weight to qualify for as a cruiserweight, and he met his goal. Moreover, Hardy succeeded Kidman as champion after hitting a Twist of Fate for the pin.

Two subsequent matches also resulted in losses; one against Bill DeMott taped for *Velocity* February 25 and another face-off against Hardy on *Smackdown* March 6. He picked up a win on *Velocity* March 8 against Shannon Moore before

returning to *Smackdown* with Rey Mysterio opposite tag team champions World's Greatest Tag Team (Charlie Haas and Shelton Benjamin) in a non-title contest. A nearly-botched Shooting Star Press injured Kidman, and he spent the next few months recovering.

Kidman offered his perspective in a 2013 interview with WWE.com: “On that night, we were facing The World’s Greatest Tag Team, who was on a roll. They were actually a really great team. There was a lot of crazy back-and-forth action in that match. There was a lot of near-falls. I remember doing a Shooting Star Press to the floor to both of those guys, which got a big reaction. At the end of the match, there was a blind tag and the champions pinned Rey after a powerbomb-springboard-clothesline combination. I tried to come in to make the save, but didn’t quite make it. I just remember it being a good night even though we lost. I always liked teaming with Rey, and also wrestling Charlie and Shelton. I’m proud of that match.”

He was equally vocal during an early 2003 guest

appearance on *Byte This!,* making not-so-friendly comments about Brock Lesnar's Shooting Star Press at *WrestleMania XIX.*

"It's quite disrespectful, because, I mean, yeah, he's the world champ; well now he is, and he's in the upper echelon," Kidman clarified. "But the bottom line is there's a code of ethics that you just don't take other people's moves, especially finishing moves."

“I'm glad he's okay; don't get me wrong, I don't wish injury upon anybody. But basically, I can go out there and basically F-5 pretty much anybody. That's not a move that's impossible to do. But would I do it? No, because it's a sign of respect. Anybody could choke slam somebody, anybody could Rock Bottom somebody, but nobody does it.”

He added it was the Shooting Star Press that got him recognized among fans at the beginning of his WCW career, and appreciated Marc Mero asking if he could use the move as Johnny B. Badd. Kidman denied permission and Mero had obliged until he arrived at WWE. Since it was a separate promotion, Kidman didn't view Mero’s subsequent actions as an affront.

Kidman reemerged June 25 on *Smackdown* seated ringside between two women, Jesse from *Tough Enough* and local indy valet Miss Michelle. He sported a new short-haired look, which was encouraged by Torrie during his time away from television.

He appeared in the front row again July 3. After Cruiserweight Champion Rey Mysterio's victory over Nunzio, Kidman leaped into the ring and offered enthusiastic congratulations. They teamed the following week on *Smackdown* in a four-way tag match, scoring a win over the APA, FBI (Full-Blooded Italians), and The Basham Brothers.

Kidman managed to find time for a wedding in between; he married Torrie Wilson on July 11, 2003 in Connecticut. Several WWE and former WCW wrestlers were in attendance alongside the couple's families and non-wrestling friends.

He joined Mysterio on *Smackdown* July 17 to defeat Los Conquistadors (Rob Conway and Nick Dinsmore under masks) to become #1 contenders for the Tag Team Championship at *Vengeance*.

Kidman and Mysterio left the championship match empty-handed, but the year ended on a high note when Kidman and Ultimo Dragon defeated Akio and Sakoda the *Velocity's* last episode of 2003.

Another title chase was in the works for the coming year, but Kidman wouldn't be alone.

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As a singles performer, Billy Kidman continued squaring off against a variety of opponents during 2004's opening months; meanwhile, he and began ascending the tag team ranks with newcomer Paul London.

The newly formed pair showed potential on *Smackdown* and *Velocity*, but their off-camera relationship wasn't so friendly.

During a 2008 interview with False Count Radio,

London revealed he never liked Kidman as a person. London admired his work in WCW "when he was 100 pounds lighter," but found Kidman mediocre as a worker and not really entertaining at all.

London explained how the tag team was formed: both had dark hair, were well-tanned, around the same age, about the same height, one was bigger than the other, and both liked to go to the top rope.

Kidman responded in 2010 to a Twitter follower who asked if he had as much heat for London: “I don't even talk to the guy. He's just full of himself.”

Off-screen differences aside, the team began earning their chops January 29 by losing to The Basham Brothers in a tag team championship match. Kidman and London made additional appearances together on *Smackdown* and *Velocity* through mid-2004 between their respective solo efforts against other cruiserweights.

In the interim, Kidman took a short break to participate in *WrestleMania XX’s* Cruiserweight Open won by Chavo Guerrero.

Kidman and London’s crowning moment came on

Smackdown July 8, 2004 in an upset win over tag team champions The Dudley Boyz.

A backstage celebration followed with Mysterio, Hardcore Holly, Billy Gunn, Torrie, Sho Funaki and other *Smackdown* roster members. The room became thick with tension after the Dudleys arrived, but old and new champions ended up shaking hands with one another.

The new champions aimed to prove their unexpected yet exciting win wasn't a fluke and once again defeated the Dudleys July 29 in a rematch.

They went on to defend the titles against The Bashams on August 5, then joined forces with Rey Mysterio at *SummerSlam* ten days later to face Bubba, DVon, and Spike Dudley in a six-man tag match.

Being one half of the current tag team champions was hard work, but Kidman found time to join Torrie in filming an episode of MTV's *Cribs* featuring the home they shared in Tampa, Florida. According to Hillsbourgh County records, the *Cribs* residence was sold for $546,000 in May 2004.

Kidman and London's championship run continued through late summer until an unfortunate accident thwarted their story line in another direction.

Chavo Guerrero suffered a severe concussion on Smackdown August 26 from Kidman's botched Shooting Star Press. The unintentional yet legitimate injury spurned an angle where a guilt-ridden Kidman became apprehensive about hitting the Shooting Star Press on other opponents.

Kidman's repeated hesitation cost him and London additional matches and eventually their championship when he once again balked at using the Shooting Star Press.

He climbed off the top rope, tagged in London, walked backstage, and left his partner alone to be double teamed by Kenzo Suzuki and René Duprée, who emerged as the new tag team champions.

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What was wrong with Billy Kidman? Why would he no longer follow through with his most famous move? Many wanted answers, and Michael Cole set out to find some during an in-ring interview segment with Kidman September 16.

Cole stated that not only did Kidman turn his back on his longtime friend and partner London, but also walked out on the tag team championship.

“Billy, let’s face it,” Cole pressed. “I mean, let’s face it. You quit, didn’t you?”

“First of all, Cole, I’m not a quitter,” Kidman replied, “and I resent you calling me one. Second of all, I didn’t walk out on anyone. I was trying to prevent another injury.”

“So you’re referring to the Shooting Star Press?”

“Yeah, Cole, I am. And let me take this opportunity to explain that I’m the most misunderstood superstar on *Smackdown*. Why can’t you people understand that I’m not afraid to do the Shooting Star Press? I’m afraid of hurting people...and I hurt Chavo Guerrero.”

Kidman recapped the incident that resulted in Guerrero's injury and blamed himself for Guerrero's severe concussion. "But the grace of God," he added, "Chavo will be okay and still be able to provide for his family; yet *I'm* the quitter? I'm the bad guy for not wanting to do that to another human being?"

He asked the crowd if they really wanted to see the Shooting Star Press. They responded with loud cheers.

"You *really* want to see me hit that move?"

Louder cheers answered his question.

Kidman wondered if fans were that bloodthirsty that they wanted to see someone else hurt.

“What kind of animals are you?” he asked, clearly appalled.

Paul London then appeared and confronted his former tag partner. He asked Kidman that if he wasn’t ready to compete the previous week, why did he agree to defend the tag team championship?

"*You* walked out on *me!*" London angrily added. "It's because of *you* we lost the tag titles! Now you can deny this all you want, but you quit. Now…what do you have to say?"

Devoid of visible emotion, Kidman stared down London. "To *you?* Nothing."

London slapped him and prepared to fight, but much to everyone's chagrin, Kidman calmly walked away from the ring.

He asserted his current position during a September 2004 episode of *Byte This!* "Basically as a champion, you want to get in there, give everyone a shot, and be a fighting champion. And I didn't realize it was going to affect me the way it did. I thought that maybe I could get through it,

you know. And once I got up to the top turnbuckle and...and tried to do it, that's when it really hit me. And you know, if Paul [London] was any kind of partner, maybe he would have went out [of the ring] with me and see what was wrong. And if he would have done that, as a matter of fact, he would've been counted out and we'd still have the belts! But instead he tries to fight like a hero and gets the crap beat out of him, and then we lose the championship. So whose fault is that, mine or his?"

He elaborated to host Josh Matthews what he'd done had the situation been different. "Josh, look. If I was your partner and you had something wrong going around in your head, I would care enough to want to help you work through that. I'm not gonna go take on three, four, five, six, seven guys all by myself."

"Billy, you were involved in a tag team title match on *Smackdown!"* Matthews reminded him. "And you left."

"Yeah well, this isn't like a little bruised shoulder like Paul had the other week. You know, this is a serious problem!"

Matthews asked Kidman if he and London could ever put aside their differences and try to get the

gold back. Kidman replied he would have until Paul's true colors came out. His goal was just getting his in-ring action back together, and then maybe the cruiserweight or tag team title run - but not with London.

***

Kidman appeared dejected when he faced London on *Smackdown's* fifth anniversary show September 23. It was clear he didn't want to be there; his mind not totally "in the game."

London, on the other hand, was fired up and ready to go as if eager to settle a score, but Kidman again walked away despite London's goading and the referee counting him out.

Escaping *Smackdown* general manager Theodore Long wasn't so simple; he'd caught Kidman trying to slip out of the arena with his bags.

Long stated that he booked the match between Kidman and London because it was one everyone wanted to see.

“Everybody wants to see you do the Shooting Star Press!” he stressed.

There was one thing Long didn’t want on his roster, and that was a quitter. He told Kidman he’d have a match against Paul London, and it would be live on pay-per-view at *No Mercy*. If Kidman decided not to appear or showed up and walked out again, he would be fired.

“I haven’t fired anybody since I took over,” Long said, “but I got no problem making *you* be the first. You feel me?”

Whether something eventually snapped in his head or Long’s words had sunken in, but fans saw a change in Kidman’s demeanor September 30 during a match between London and Booker T.

Kidman stood at the entrance ramp and briefly distracted London, which led to Booker winning the match.

Booker pulled a steel chair from under the ring for an additional attack on London before Kidman sprinted toward the ring, snatched the chair from Booker, and chased him out of the ring.

Did he suddenly have a change of heart?

It first appeared that Kidman did before he whacked London with the chair.

"You don't get me, Paul?" he yelled. "*You don't get me?* You don't understand? Maybe you get it now!"

He rose, threw down the chair, glared at London's fallen figure, and walked out of the ring, heel turn complete.

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The *No Mercy* match that took place on October 3, 2004 was booked after Paul London sustained a broken nose during his contest against Booker T August 23. The injury required surgery and a few months off to recover.

He and Kidman squared off with London getting the early upper hand. His dominance didn't last long before Kidman responded by punting London, rammed him into a ring post, attacked his ribs several times throughout the match.

London attempted to powerbomb Kidman at one point - which most wrestling historians know was an impossible feat - and received a face buster for his effort.

As the match neared its conclusion, Kidman positioned himself for the Shooting Star Press, but instead jumped off the rope and began walking backstage. He ultimately returned to the ring before a ten count was completed by the referee.

The match ended when London went to the top rope and attempted a Shooting Star Press. Kidman lifted his knees, which made contact with London's ribs.

Kidman followed through with the Shooting Star Press, drove his knees into London's injured ribs, and scored the pin.

He placed blame on the fans for his actions afterward. "I hope you people are happy! You made me do that!"

“Look at him! He’s got plenty of broken ribs or internal injuries, and it’s all because of you! *You* made me do it!”

He threw down the microphone, delivered a second Shooting Star Press, and landed on the helpless London, now strapped to a backboard. Kidman rose, left the ring, and walked away, never looking back on the carnage he'd left behind.

***

Billy Kidman's heel character continued to wreak havoc October 7; he was about to hit the Shooting Star Press on Charlie Haas when Miss Jackie interfered in their match. A brief dispute ensued between them before Kidman executed a BK Bomb on Jackie.

He then kicked Haas out of the ring and tossed

aside the referee before going for the Shooting Star Press on Jackie. He hesitated for a moment, uttered “I don’t think so,” climbed down from the ropes, and walked backstage smirking while officials and Rico checked on Jackie’s condition.

Haas sought revenge for the attack on Jackie and the two faced off again October 14. Haas didn't fare any better; he'd suffered an injury at a house show several days earlier.

Dawn Marie rushed to the ring and begged Kidman not to do the Shooting Star Press. He ignored her pleas and followed through on his finisher, smashing Haas' affected knee.

But Kidman soon had another challenge waiting in the wings after a familiar face returned to *Smackdown*.

***

Chavo Guerrero made his comeback 55 days after a devastating concussion nearly ended his career. He told the audience it didn't matter if the fans loved or hated him, the support he'd gotten was great. Guerrero thanked the fans for their support, and was glad to be back home on *Smackdown*.

Kidman's appearance interrupted Guerrero's touching speech. He condescendingly applauded Guerrero and welcomed him back.

He went into details how he and Guerrero went way back to WCW days and how the recent incident brought them closer together, because in a way, they were both victims.

"I mean, you suffered from the horrible concussion," Kidman said, "but I suffered too. I

mean, these people turned on me and made me into a monster over an accident...*an accident.”*

He wished there were more people like Guerrero; even though the fans didn't forgive Kidman for what happened, he knew Guerrero did, and it was all that mattered.

Guerrero responded by stating that everyone knew wrestling was a tough business and his family was horrified about him coming back. He'd been close to not returning to something he loved, but then an old friend otherwise convinced him.

Guerrero then shook Kidman's hand and the two briefly hugged. When they broke the embrace, Guerrero pulled back Kidman for a few final words:

"Oh, and Billy, by the way, that friend I was

talking about...*sure the hell wasn't you!"*

Guerrero attacked Kidman and clotheslined him over the top rope. Kidman staggered backstage, stunned at the about-face.

It was obviously an outcome he'd never expected.

***

Between additional confrontations with Chavo Guerrero in subsequent weeks, Kidman teamed with fellow heels Spike Dudley and Akio for occasional tag matches on *Smackdown* and *Velocity*. Paul London returned to action in December and defeated Kidman in a match taped for *Velocity*.

He joined Akio in defeating London and Guerrero preceding the *Armageddon* pay-per-view in a match shown live on *Sunday Night Heat* December 1, and then lost a match for the tag team championship four days later against title holders Rob Van Dam and Rey Mysterio,

A final face-off of 2004 against saw Guerrero claim victory over Kidman during *Velocity's* December 30 episode, with another meeting on

January 1 producing the same outcome.

No one ever guessed that his days with WWE were numbered as the New Year got underway.

***

Billy Kidman suffered a broken orbital bone in January 2005 and was sidelined for nearly three months. He rarely appeared on television during early 2005, but joined Spike Dudley and Akio on March 31 to participate in a Fan Frenzy special promotion for the upcoming *WrestleMania 21*, where they lost to Paul London, Funaki, and Nunzio.

Kidman also took part in a Battle Royal on *Sunday Night Heat* April 3, and another face-off with London April 7 in a cruiserweight title match touted as one of the year's most brutal bouts.

He immediately attacked at the bell, yelling that *he* should be champion. It appeared to be an even fight between champion and challenger before

Kidman plowed London head first into the turnbuckles and sent him to the floor.

He rolled London back into the ring for a two count, with London bleeding from a head wound that later required 18 staples to close. Referee Charles Robinson asked London if he wanted to continue. London nodded, brushed by him, and continued to go after Kidman.

London went for 450, but Kidman moved out of the way in time. London charged again, but Kidman lifted him for a slam. London pulled off a win by rolling Kidman into a small package.

Chavo Guerrero argued with London following the match, which gave Kidman an opportunity to ambush London from behind. He and Guerrero took turns demolishing the cruiserweight champion before leaving him in a bloody heap.

Kidman's final WWE match aired on *Velocity,* nearly two weeks before he and seven other roster members were released from their contracts. Despite rumors among the wrestling community his termination was a result of injuring himself and others, Kidman stated the contrary in a *Sun Online* interview.

“We were at a WWE talent meeting and they were saying how great business was overseas and how much money they made on the last tour to Australia,” he told reporter Simon Rothstein. “Then, in the very next sentence, they told us they're not going to fly us business class on foreign trips anymore. So we were looking at 10-20 hour flights in economy class.”

“I had heard rumors they may be doing that and I was already fed up about the many different ways in which they take advantage of us. So I asked, 'Why would you cut the budget from overseas tours when that's where we're making money and when we go over there so much? Why not cut budgets in the States? You brought in a dress code because you said we had to look like athletes, so show me one athlete who flies economy class.’”

Changes made by management to the overseas flight policy wasn’t Kidman’s only grievance. “When I started in wrestling I couldn't understand why the veterans would do the same thing every night. But after 10 years of being treated like crap in WCW and WWE I can see why. You don't want to screw the fans, but you are drained mentally and don't want to give your all,” he told

Sun Online. “I never ever ever thought I'd get to the point where I didn't want to wrestle anymore. In my whole life all I ever wanted to do was work for the WWE. But you can only be treated like a caged animal for so long before something snaps.”

Kidman's morale was at its lowest, and with exception of appearing at an October 8 Action Wrestling Entertainment against Ryan Wood, he not only overpriced himself to other promoters on purpose, but also didn't bother watching matches on television.

It was time to step back and consider other career options, a move that eventually proved to be beneficial to him in many aspects.

***

On His Own

Appearing on the independent circuit after spending years with major federations could be perceived as a wrestler's career downgrade by many, but grapplers rediscovering their indy roots welcome its change in pace. While the pay is far less than that of WWE or even TNA - if a worker is paid at all - appearing in independent promotions can offer more flexible schedules, expanded match time restrictions, and wrestling in styles that show an athlete's true potential.

Returning to the independents in early 2006 rekindled Billy Kidman's passion for wrestling, and his long-restored enthusiasm shone in the *Sun Online* interview. "I did a tag team match in Italy

that they wanted to go about 12 minutes. It started to go a little longer than that and I was freaking out! I'm used to getting yelled at if you go 30 seconds over. Even if you hit your time queue, you'll get yelled at for something else. For 10 years it was like that."

“So I was thinking, 'Oh man, this is it. This will be my first and last time here.' Then we got to the back and the promoters actually thanked me for working so hard and entertaining the fans! We didn't plan on going that long but went with the flow of the crowd, so to be appreciated for it was a breath of fresh air. To be able to go out there and perform, and do what I love to do, makes it fun again. And for a long time, it hasn't been fun for me.”

Kidman kicked off his independent career January 28, 2006 in Italy where he defeated Fire Angel, Milanito Collection At, and Nosawa in a four-way dance during Day One of Nu-Wrestling Evolution’s Indexpoint.Net Wrestling Tour. He teamed with Ultimo Dragon January 29 for Day Two of the NWE tour, and they emerged

victorious over Nosawa and Ultimo Guerrero.

Following a loss to British wrestling legend Robbie Brookside April 29 to crown the inaugural Real Quality Wrestling Heavyweight Champion, Kidman appeared the following night at Frontier Wrestling Alliance's NOAH Limits II in Colchester, England, facing Jody Fleisch and Jonny Storm in a three-way contest.

He walked away with a loss, but wowed the audience by hitting a plancha from the balcony into the ring - a move that would've been forbidden by WWE.

Kidman continued making independent rounds and debuted with International Wrestling Association (IWA) on January 13, 2007 as a challenger for the Undisputed World Heavyweight Championship, a bout he lost to Ray González.

He made an appearance on *Carnage Bloodsport Banter's* radio show in February 2007 while working shows in Las Vegas. Kidman told the hosts that one of his biggest moments in wrestling was Bret Hart approaching him after his match with Eddie Guerrero. Hart told him that he was a credit to the business.

He’d appeared in more WCW matches than originally planned during the Raven’s Flock angle because Raven talked writers into giving Kidman his in-ring slot on nights he wasn’t in the mood to wrestle.

Kidman has also appeared at some shows working under a mask in a style similar to Haybusa's.

Before the *Carnage Bloodsport Banter* interview concluded, Kidman was asked to share one of his favorite road stories. He gave an account - complete with lurid details - about meeting two married women during a wrestling show's intermission and later slept with both of them at the same time.

It wasn't a story meant to be heard by younger listeners at the time and won't be further elaborated in this book.

***

While professional life for Kidman seemed to be back on solid ground as of February 2006, he went through a rough time with his divorce from Torrie Wilson after the couple separated later that year. He cited her travel schedule as one problem leading to the split, something many predicted would put a strain on their marriage after Kidman was released by WWE.

No one knows exactly what happened, but some wouldn't have been surprised if both dated outside the marriage at some point, while others asserted that the split wasn't an amicable one.

"The way she treated him at the end was so sad," a source commented. "That's all I'll say on the subject."

Torrie stated little about her former husband during an audio interview with *The Interactive Interview* show. "I have absolutely nothing nice to say about that individual. His views on morals are very different from mine."

Kidman voiced his view after a Twitter follower of his and Torrie's asked her in early 2011 if they had remained friends: "I'll answer that for her and

say *nowhere* near friends."

The couple spent many years together and an adjustment to rarely seeing one another would've been difficult. There was also the aspect of no matter how much trust someone placed in their partner, thoughts of a spouse or lover alone in another part of the world - and open to temptations of acting on attentions from the opposite sex - couldn't easily be dismissed.

Neither were known to publicly discuss their relationships and both have kept mum on the exact cause of their breakup to this day.

The divorce was finalized in 2008, and each has since moved on in their lives.

***

Kidman had few independent wrestling dates during the remainder of 2006. A Southern Championship Wrestling contest against Dagon Briggs and face-off with Jason Blade for MXW's Golden Quest both resulted in defeats, but he still enjoyed entertaining a new breed of fans.

He worked two WWE dark matches under the

Japanese mask gimmick later that summer, winning over stripping fireman Chad Wicks before *Raw's* July 24 episode. Before July 28's taping of Smackdown on July 28, Kidman lost to Jimmy Yang in a dark match.

Neither tryout resulted in a contract signing.

2007 showed more promise career wise. Following an appearance on the IZW/ICW tour in Okinawa, Japan where he was defeated by former WCW colleague Norman Smiley, Kidman became a figure on Australian Wrestling Federation/World Series Wrestling's *East Coast Australian International Assault II* tour.

A June 1 title match against AWF Heavyweight Champion TNT resulted in a loss, but Kidman prevailed over Bryan Danielson (now Daniel Bryan in WWE) June 3 to become World Series Wrestling Heavyweight Champion. He still holds that title to the present day.

Kidman's next stop was Panama for Revolution Xtreme Wrestling (RXW), where he squared off against RXW Champion Slash in a title bout.

Kidman returned to America without the championship belt, but it wasn't his last meeting with the hard-hitting Slash.

He teamed with Sean Waltman July 8 to compete in a triple threat match for National Wrestling Alliance's vacated World Tag Team titles in McAllen, Texas, but the pair was defeated by Karl Anderson and Joey Ryan.

Another appearance took place with NWA Midwest in Illinois September 22, where Kidman competed in a four-way elimination match against Jason Dukes, Joey Ryan, and Billy Roc. He was one of the final two contenders before being pinned by Dukes.

A second RXW match in Panama on September 29 against Slash produced a more successful outcome when Kidman emerged as the new RXW World Heavyweight Champion.

While Kidman did fairly well on the independent circuit throughout 2006 and 2007, another career door unexpectedly opened in the interim: the opportunity to become a trainer with Florida Championship Wrestling.

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Florida Championship Wrestling

Florida Championship Wrestling (FCW) originated as Championship Wrestling from Florida in 1961 and operated under its Florida Championship Wrestling banner from 1987 until August 2012. FCW then served as WWE's main developmental facility from 2008 until the FCW name became WWE's own brand, NXT.

FCW Arena continued hosting NXT events until December 19, 2013; while a new Tampa location was not announced as of this book's publication, NXT currently broadcasts from the Full Sail LIVE venue at Full Sail University's Orlando campus. NXT programming can also be seen weekly on Hulu Plus and the WWE Network.

Billy Kidman's FCW stretch began at the facility's gym, where he prepared for an upcoming overseas tour, working with several newcomers in the process. He enjoyed the experience so much that he returned to assist wherever needed on a regular basis.

“I loved being there,” he told WWE.com. “Just to see the younger guys and that fire they had and how they wanted to learn, I really enjoyed it.”

Staff writer Jonathan Milton wrote a feature on FCW that was published in the *Tampa Bay Times’* February 22, 2008 edition. Kidman demonstrating a headlock and a hair pull maneuver on then-newcomer Yamamoto Naofumi was one of several photos accompanying Milton’s article.

Seeds of trainer ambitions were planted, but Kidman still had more than enough fighting spirit to challenge younger talent, making his FCW debut September 15, 2007 with Lacey Von Erich as his valet. He was defeated by "Bulldog" Harry Smith for the FCW Southern Title and also

competed in a Battle Royal won by G-Rilla later that evening.

He filled in for Teddy Hart as part of The New Generation Hart Foundation on October 13. The foursome - Kidman, Harry Smith, TJ Wilson, and Ted DiBiase Jr. - pulled off an impressive win over G-Rilla, Jake Hager, Afa Jr. and Shawn Osborne in an eight-man No Disqualification tag team match.

A feud with “Handsome” Heath Miller began with Miller’s November 6 *Happy Hour* talk show segment with Kidman as a guest. Miller stated he’d idolized Kidman, and then commented that Kidman’s career was in a decline. The two adversaries faced off several more times within the next year.

Kidman officially signed on as an FCW trainer in December 2007 but continued wrestling into early 2008. He retired as an active competitor not long after losing to Afa Jr. in a final FCW in-ring appearance February 23.

Nevertheless, fans still held out for a possible comeback in the future.

“Billy, when are you returning to the squared

circle?” a Twitter follower asked.

“I'm not,” he replied. “Career’s done.”

When he wasn't overseeing the development of future WWE stars such as Sheamus, Wade Barrett, Kofi Kingston and Justin Gabriel or taking part in FCW's talent evaluation clinics, Kidman began expressing interest in working behind the scenes of an actual wrestling television show.

Kidman delved into gaining experience in several areas of TV production with much fervor as he'd done during the early years of his wrestling career.

His enthusiasm for gaining experience eventually led to a position in production for the company long familiar to him - World Wrestling Entertainment.

***

Return to WWE: Behind the Scenes (And Then Some)

We've heard the term "producer" in many areas of entertainment, but what exactly are their jobs?

The Producers Guild of America describes producers as someone who "initiates, coordinates, supervises and controls, either on his own authority, or subject to the authority of an employer, all aspects of the motion-picture and/or television production process, including creative, financial, technological and administrative. A producer is involved throughout all phases of production from inception to completion, including coordination, supervision and control of all other talents and crafts, subject to the

provisions of their collective bargaining agreements and personal service contracts."

Producers working in the film industry prepare and supervise movie projects before the work is presented to financers or distributors; in music, they supervise the entire process of an artist's music, and overseeing all aspects of video production is the primary role of a television producer.

In professional wrestling, road agents are referred to by WWE and other companies as producers. These middle management employees - usually retired wrestlers - travel with and act as liaisons between wrestlers and higher management. Road agents/producers also help plan matches, put together story lines, and sometimes train/teach younger wrestlers.

Billy Kidman returned to World Wrestling Entertainment in 2010 as an agent/producer. Taking over the role previously held by Hall of Famer Jerry Brisco, Kidman currently works with wrestlers on pacing their matches and segments.

His job duties are far from easy; it's not uncommon to prolong/cut a backstage segment, add matches, or even cancel previously scheduled

bouts at practically the last minute. These spur of the moment changes are reasons the term “card subject to change” often appears in announcements of upcoming shows.

“We are running a live television show,” he said on WWE.com. “Really anything can happen.”

Kidman isn't always limited to remaining behind the scenes, however; there are several occasions where he's either appeared ringside or been the subject of random name-dropping.

He was spotted on April 10, 2010 assisting an injured Ezekiel Jackson backstage during a house show in Glasgow, Scotland, and mentioned by John Cena November 22 during a "farewell speech" on *Raw*:

> "Billy Kidman's probably ready to strangle himself because I'm way over what they told me..."

Kidman was also among an array of officials and superstars who broke up a brawl between John Cena and Brock Lesnar on *Raw's* April 9, 2012

episode.

Among other WWE-related projects aside from his production duties, Kidman appeared in *Creating WWE Smackdown vs. RAW 2009* as part of the game's Motion Capture Team.

Other documentaries include *WWE Greatest Superstars of the 21st Century* (2011), *50 Greatest Finishing Moves in WWE History* (2012, DVD Disc 1 extra; Best Buy US exclusive), *NWO: The Revolution* (2012), and *Card Subject to Change* (2010, featuring an indy promotion match against Trent Acid).

Archived footage of Kidman can be seen in *WCW: Greatest Pay-Per-View Matches Vol. 1* (2014; one of three Blu-Ray extras), *WWE: Rey Mysterio - The Life of a Masked Man* (2011), *Wrestling's Highest Flyers* (2010; one of four bonus matches), *WWE: The Rise and Fall of WCW* (2009), *WWE Summerslam: The Complete Anthology, Vol. 4* (2008), and *WWE Divas: Undressed* (2002).

As of this book's publication, Kidman's most recent live appearance took place November 10, 2013 at a live event in Glasgow. He portrayed "Dr. Weisenberg," Paul Heyman's personal physician, pushing Heyman to the ring in a wheelchair shortly before CM Punk arrived. Punk jumped Kidman before he threw Heyman into the ring and beat him down with a kendo stick.

While Kidman seems almost forgotten by most fans these days - and his name all but unfamiliar to the present generation - he apparently still exists in minds of some old school wrestling aficionados; one actually made the attempt to start a "Billy Kidman" chant during *Raw* on January 27, 2014.

Billy Kidman - among the other men and women who once took their respective places in the squared circle - should be recognized for contributions they've made to the world of sports entertainment.

We seldom hear stories of wrestling stars from past eras discovering other niches following their in-ring glory days, but Kidman continues to flourish in the business. Some fans think he's

worthy of a future Hall of Fame induction; whether such an honor will eventually be bestowed upon him remains uncertain.

454 matches, 46 pay-per-views, a 2004 ECWA Hall of Fame induction, 16 championships, and other noteworthy career moments are accomplishments of which any grappler should reflect upon with pride.

The youngster once told he'd never break into the wrestling business due to lack of size realized his ambition through beating the odds with talent and old-fashioned hard work.

"Always follow your dreams and don't give up on it," he advised in a 1999 *WOW* interview. "You never know where it will take you."

Almost two decades later, Kidman is still amazed to be part of the business and how far he's come since that very first match in Hellertown, Pennsylvania.

"I never thought I'd get here," he admitted to WWE.com in 2011. "To still be involved is a great thing."

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ECWA Tag Team titles w/Ace Darling
USWA World Tag Team titles w/Ace Darling (April 12, 1997)
TWWF World Cruiserweight title
WCW Cruiserweight title (September 14, 1998)
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WWF Cruiserweight title (April 2, 2002)

WWE Cruiserweight title (November 17, 2002)
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World Series Wrestling Heavyweight title (June 3, 2007)
RXW (Revolution Xtreme Wrestling) Heavyweight title (September 29, 2007-Panama)

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The Music

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About the Author

L. Anne Carrington is an Amazon bestselling author, freelance writer/journalist, and radio show host whose previous work covered topics from fiction to news stories, human interest features, and entertainment reviews. She wrote *The Wrestling Babe* Internet column for seven years, a former music reviewer for *Indie Music Stop*, former book reviewer for Free Press (an imprint of Simon and Schuster), and pens several other works which appears in both print and Web media.

One of her freelance articles, *An Overview of Causes of Hearing Loss and Deafness,* was bought by Internet Broadcasting Systems, a company that co-produced NBCOlympics.com for the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens and the 2006 Torino Winter Olympics in addition to being the leading provider of Web sites, content and advertising revenue solutions to the largest

and most successful media companies.

In addition to her acclaimed novels in *The Cruiserweight Series* among works of both fiction and nonfiction, Ms. Carrington hosts *The L. Anne Carrington Show* on Spreaker Radio.

She spends time between Pittsburgh, PA and Tampa, FL, continuing to write.

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